

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1505.2(b)), the environmentally preferred alternative must be identified in the Record of Decision.

BLM considers the environmentally preferred alternative for the Pinedale Anticline Project to be the *Resource Protection Alternative on All Lands and Minerals*. However, since the BLM does not have the authority to implement this alternative on private and state lands, the agency environmentally preferred alternative is identified as the *Resource Protection Alternative on Federal Lands and Minerals*. The BLM believes that the RPA on Federal Lands and Minerals promotes the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act. The RPA on Federal Lands and Minerals will protect, preserve, and enhance historic, cultural, and natural resources on the Federal lands. In addition, the RPA on Federal Lands and Minerals: 1) best meets the BLM statutory mission under the Mineral Leasing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act; 2) identifies additional and required mitigation which includes all reasonable and practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the proposed development; 3) includes an intrinsic mechanism by which resources and impacts are monitored providing further opportunity to reduce or minimize environmental harm (i.e., Adaptive Environmental Management Process; continued implementation of the Pinedale Anticline mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and sage grouse studies and associated mitigation and monitoring; surface and groundwater quality monitoring; transportation planning under the oversight review of the established Transportation Planning Committee; air quality impact emissions tracking in cooperation with the Wyoming DEQ-Air Quality Division; reclamation monitoring; etc.); and 4) includes a monitoring and enforcement program which will be structured to ensure implementation and maintenance of necessary mitigation.

Also, selection of the RPA on Federal Lands and Minerals as the agency preferred Alternative is based on the analyses presented in the Pinedale Anticline Natural Gas Exploration and Development Project EIS, which updates the oil/gas reasonably foreseeable development (RFD) to comply with the Pinedale Resource Management Plan and incorporates the commitment to implement specific mitigation measures. Besides the identified additional and required mitigation and monitoring, the RPA on Federal Lands and Minerals is the agency environmentally preferred because it: 1) incorporates and emphasizes the requirement that the operator and their

contractor must comply with all Federal, State, and other regulatory requirements during construction, drilling, completion, and field production operations; 2) incorporates the consideration to modify facility designs, construction techniques, operating practices, and abandonment and reclamation procedures to avoid or minimize environmental impacts; 3) incorporates EPA and Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality best management practices (BMPs) for storm water discharge prevention which will minimize off-site sedimentation and erosion by protecting soils; 4) in cooperation with the WDEQ-AQD, tracks NO_x emissions to better predict potential impacts to air quality related values within the Class I wilderness areas of the Bridger-Teton and Shoshone National Forests; 5) incorporates appropriate and reasonable measures from the draft and final EIS that provide further opportunity to avoid or reduce impacts, provide for monitoring and enforcement as an on-going activity by the agencies and Operators which will ensure implementation of the mitigation, evaluation of its functional effectiveness, and ensure successful reclamation; 6) prescribes the relocation of project facilities and/or directional or horizontal drilling to avoid impacts to steep slopes, wetlands, historic trails, streams, sage grouse leks, raptor nests, and other sensitive surface resource values; 7) incorporates project-wide measures for preconstruction planning and design; 8) incorporates Wyoming BLM Mitigation Guidelines and Standard Practices for Surface-Disturbing and Disruptive Activities (Appendix A); 9) provides procedures for processing applications in areas of seasonal restrictions; 10) provides a transportation plan for the Pinedale Anticline Project; 11) provides a hazardous materials summary; 12) provides a programmatic agreement between the BLM and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the treatment of cultural resource clearances, discoveries, Native American sensitive sites; handling human remains, and historic sites (Appendix E); and 13) incorporates the additional mitigation opportunities identified in the draft and final EIS for the minimization of impacts to various resources.

The RPA on Federal Lands and Minerals meets the requirements of Federal Regulation 43 CFR 3162.1(a), directing lessees and/or operators to conduct "...all operations in a manner which ensures the proper handling, measurement, disposition, and site security of leasehold production; which protects other natural resources and environmental quality; which protects life and property; and which results in maximum ultimate economic recovery of oil and gas with minimum waste and with minimum adverse effect on ultimate recovery of other mineral resources."